THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1912.

## NATURE IN ROMAN LITERATURE.

*The Love of Nature among the Romans during the Later Decades of the Republic and the First Century of the Empire.* By Sir A. Geikie, K.C.B., F.R.S. Pp. xi+394. (London: John Murray, 1912.) Price 9*s.* net.

THIS is indeed a delightful book, full of contagious zest and charm. The love of nature, the love of science, the love of the best literature both of the past and the present, all combine to make it so. It represents the happy adventure of one of our very foremost men of science, the President of the Royal Society, and the *doyen* of British geology, into the realm of classical scholarship and Roman literature. The "classics," as they are commonly called among those who love them and write about them, suffer too often by being made a business of. The affection of the schoolmaster or the classical professor is discounted as being professional, and its sincerity is a little doubted. It is only when some old statesman or soldier, some lawyer or physician, some original modern poet who has made his own name, after experience of the world, turns again, as Cardinal Newman in the famous passage in the Grammar of Assent describes him doing, to the Homer or Horace of his schoolboy hours, that we feel that the classics are being taken at their real value and that their natural undying charm is once more powerfully vindicated.

Specially is this the case when their beauty is avowed, *quod minime reris,* by a man of science. But, indeed, there should be no feud between the love of natural knowledge and of literary art, and, above all, of poetry, the best of which rests so much upon the close observation and faithful presentment of nature. There used not to be such a feud. It may be hoped that we are returning to a more healthy condition both of science and of scholarship when a book such as this comes into being. What were its occasion and origin Sir Archibald Geikie tells us in his modest, pleasant preface. He was asked by the Classical Association to become their president, and he chose, he tells us, for his address a subject which "seemed in some measure to combine the classical interests of the members with his own deep love of nature." This book is the expansion of the address which he then gave—an address which came, perhaps, as somewhat of a surprise to some, but not to those who knew Sir Archibald well or who remembered his Romanes Lecture at Oxford, or his book on "Landscape in History."

Such readers will not be surprised to hear that this new volume is excellently written. The great masters of science have usually written well, but this is more than well written. It is eminently readable, in a style at once lucid and sustained, and sympathetic with its subject. Indeed, it might be used to point the moral that an acquaintance with the masterpieces of antiquity is not without its uses to the modern student or exponent of science.

What may surprise, is that the President of the Royal Society should prove himself so well informed a scholar and, to use the classical phrase, so "ripe" a scholar. For not only is he well "posted up," not only has he read his monographs, his Pelham on the Italian *pascua,* or his Boissier's "Varron"—a rare book—but, still more, to the accuracy and completeness which his science might teach him, he adds a judgment, tact, and taste, pre-eminently considered, mellow, and mature.

It may be noted that he has for the most part translated himself, and often into verse, the many quotations which he makes from the Latin poets. This is a bold course, but justified both by the general good level of the renderings, and still more because it secures two advantages, the first, that of exactness of understanding for the writer himself; the second, that of consistency of presentment for his readers.

The volume, then, is essentially a "humane" book. It is written with real feeling and *con amore.* Geology, notwithstanding its "stony names," of which Tennyson made such ingenious poetic use,

> Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap and tuff,
> Amygdaloid and trachyte,

is really a humane study, for it deals with the structure of the dwelling in which we live, the history and character of the home of our race so far back as we can trace its chronicle.

When Sir Archibald looks at the literature, the poetry, the mode of life, the tastes of the Romans with the "modern eye," the scientific eye, he naturally first sees Italy as a geologist, and, so doing, throws a new light on the figures and epithets, the descriptions and the criticisms, with which the scholar is so familiar.

Italy, the Italy of Cicero and Virgil, the

> Magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus
> Magna virum,

was always, in the broad geological and geographical sense, the Italy she is now; her kindly and temperate skies with their *indulgentia caeli*; her double sea, largely the secret of her skies; her northern wall and spinal chain of mountains; her lakes; her short rivers, here torrent, here stagnant, now in "spate," now parched threads, the consequence of these mountains; her volcanic energies, slumbering or active—these have always been the same. They make the *mise-en-scène*; they give the colour and the form to the pictures which her poets have drawn in all ages. They are the eternal factors on which the tillers of her soil, the cultivators of her woodlands, have counted, and with which they have contended, from age to age.

The Romans and the ancient Italians were a race of "country men" and "country gentlemen." The rich and fashionable loved to go to "town" for the season. The poorer, when they could get so far, loved more and more the excitement of the city shows and spectacles too, but there were many among both who also loved the country, and not a few who, especially in middle and later life, loved the country more. Like Burke at Beaconsfield or Warren Hastings at Daylesford, like Gladstone at Hawarden or Disraeli at Hughenden, Cicero and Hortensius enjoyed, even if they kept one eye ever on Rome, the refreshment of their *villegiatura*. Horace, though for a time, like Browning, a lover of society, a dandy, and a diner-out, yet more and more came to prefer his Sabine farm. Virgil, like Tennyson, made rare and shy incursions into the metropolis, but like Tennyson again at Farringford or Aldworth, so Virgil at Naples or Nola preferred the *secessus*, the solitude of sea and upland.

Sir Archibald has brought out another resemblance between these two poets, for just as Tennyson never forgot the smallest detail of the "wold" and "marsh" and "table-shore" of Lincolnshire, so Virgil, as he points out, drew from memory, but with astonishing fidelity, the scenery of the northern home he had long left. It is true that in his early poems he introduces, by a sort of *mirage*, the scenery of Theocritus' Sicily, into the plains of Lombardy, but the greater part of his drawing is, as Sir Archibald Geikie points out, "from the life." For Virgil was by birth and nurture a countryman—indeed, a peasant. He was "brought up among orchards and woodlands." He knew the country, and he was a most accurate observer of nature. Sir Archibald Geikie quotes as an instance the famous passage in which he describes the wave rushing up, breaking in foam, flooding the sandy coves, then retreating, at first dragging the spinning pebbles with it, then finally thinning out, as it retires, into a sliding, shallow tide—"picturing," as he says, "in four pregnant words, one of the great dynamical processes of the sea." "Virgil," he adds, "knew nothing of the scientific meaning of the facts he noted, but no man of science could have observed them more accurately or described them with more concise precision." He dwells, too, on the appeal to another sense, the ear: the representation by an alliteration of rough "r's"—"*nunc rapidus retro atque aestu revoluta resorbens*," of what Tennyson, as he recalls, describes as "the scream of the maddened beach dragged down by the wave."

Sir Archibald Geikie doubts whether Virgil had seen the Lake of Como. He thinks that he probably knew the Lake of Garda, from which his own Mincius takes its course. Another scientific poet and lover of nature had no doubt. No one who has read it will forget the passage in which Goethe describes how, at the beginning of his "Italian Journey," he came to the shores of Garda; how he found the south wind blowing up the lake, lashing it into loud and dangerous waves; and how, as he waited and listened to their murmur, he realised after eighteen centuries the fidelity of Virgil's line:—

> Fluctibus et fremitu assurgens Benace marino.

The truth is, Virgil was a great "naturalist," and must always furnish the greater part of the material for any writer who tries to estimate the Roman appreciation of nature. That he does so for Sir Archibald Geikie, a glance at the index will show. One of the best passages in the volume is a page of eloquent, if condensed, prose summing up Virgil's love of woods and woodlands. But Virgil was something more than an observer. He was by education not a little of a philosopher also. It is here that he joins hands with Lucretius, whom Sir Archibald Geikie calls a philosopher and man of science, and of whom he says:—

> "Among all the poets of ancient or modern times he stands out as the one who may perhaps most fittingly be called the poet of nature."

If Virgil sprang from a peasant stock, Lucretius was of a noble family. His vivid pictures of the *blasé* Roman noble ordering his smart team of "jennets" and tearing from Rome to his place in the country, and then as rapidly back again, is drawn from habits with which he was familiar. But he himself, as these pages remind us, loved the country, mountain, sea and shore, and was in particular specially fond of animals. He loved still more the scientific speculations which these sights, or the contemplation of sun and moon, or the "wide and starry sky," suggest to the thoughtful student. His science he derived, like all Romans, from Greece.

It is not part of Sir Archibald's scheme to include the "love and knowledge of nature among the Greeks," except in so far as this is implied and contained in Roman thought and writing. That measure is, of course, a large one. The Alexandrines in particular, only partly Greek, and living and learning in cities and university towns, amid libraries and observatories, first developed the modern love alike of nature and of natural science. From them it passed to Rome. Aratus, the poet and fellow-countryman whom St. Paul quoted at Athens, was one of the most popular poets at Rome, and influenced, as the President of the Royal Society points out, Cicero and Virgil; he might have added, through Cicero, Lucretius also. Both Lucretius and Virgil, however, owed more still to the prevailing Epicureanism, which from the Greek schools of their time passed over to and permeated Italy. Catullus and Horace and Ovid fell under the same Greek influences.

But this is not the true, genuine native Roman love of nature. That love, a more superficial yet in some ways more natural and pleasing thing, is, as these pages show, to be found in almost all the poets from Catullus to Statius and Martial, in the prose-writers from Varro to Seneca. Its varied expressions and manifestations constitute a rich and copious subject, but Sir Archibald deals with this very skilfully by arranging it under different headings: the love of flowers; the love of animals; Roman gardens; flowers and foliage in Roman art; day and night; the seasons; springs, rivers, and lakes; mountains; the sea-shores; and so on. The result is that he is never tedious. The reader can take up any chapter and almost any page separately, and find something to interest him—the character of the melancholy, amorous Propertius, asking to be "put among the girls"; the clever, frivolous, querulous Ovid; the intense, direct Catullus; the pretentious and somewhat hypocritical Seneca; the importance and the character, almost personal in its significance, of winds and stars to the ancient farmer and seaman; the testimony of the Pompeiian wall-frescoes, half foreign, half local and native, their figures Greek, their landscapes Latin—each is touched in succession with a fresh eye and firm hand.

Incidentally, also, as might be expected, there are references to modern writers—not only to Tennyson, already alluded to, but to Spenser and Shakespeare, to Cowley and Cowper, to Coleridge and Keats, and, of course, to Wordsworth. Perhaps one of the most striking points which is made in these pages, is that the ancients too possessed that

> "inner eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude."

Indeed, the Romans had the very expression, for does not Ovid in his "Metamorphoses," as Sir Archibald Geikie points out, write:—

> Quae natura negabat
> Visibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris hausit?

To conclude, the theme is one which has been touched before, notably by Prof. W. R. Hardie in "Lectures on Classical Subjects," published about a dozen years ago, but never has it been handled so thoroughly or with more freshness and suggestiveness than by the President of the Royal Society in this volume, which we confidently commend to scholars and men of science, but still more confidently to the general reader.

T. HERBERT WARREN.

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## *PHYSICS—POPULAR AND APPLIED.*

(1) *Matter and Energy.* By F. Soddy, F.R.S. Pp. 256. (London: Williams and Norgate; New York: Henry Holt and Co., n.d.) Price 1*s.* net. (Home University Library of Modern Knowledge.)

(2) *Practical Exercises in Physiological Optics.* By Dr. G. J. Burch, F.R.S. Pp. 164. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912.) Price 4*s.* net.

(3) *The Energy System of Matter.* A Deduction from Terrestrial Energy Phenomena. By James Weir. Pp. ix+200. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912.) Price 6*s.* net.

(4) *The Cinematograph and Natural Science.* The Achievements and Possibilities of Cinematography as an Aid to Scientific Research. By L. Donaldson. Pp. 88. (London: Ganes, Ltd., 85, Shaftesbury Avenue, W., 1912.) Price 2*s.* 6*d.* net.

(5) *Oscillations et Vibrations.* Étude générale des Mouvements Vibratoires. By A. Boutaric. Pp. ix+403. (Paris: Octave Doin et Fils, 1912.) Price 5 francs. (Encyclopédie Scientifique.)

(6) *Physik.* Zum Gebrauch bei physikalischen Vorlesungen in höheren Lehranstalten sowie zum Selbstunterricht. By Prof. H. Böttger. Erster Band: "Mechanik, Wärmelehre, Akustik." Pp. xiii+983. ("Das Buch der Natur," Dreiundzwanzigste Auflage. Dritter Teil, Zweite Abt.) (Braunschweig: F. Vieweg und Sohn, 1912.) Price 15 marks.

(1) IT is always difficult for the reviewer of a book who naturally possesses a more or less intimate knowledge of the subject under review to write with confidence concerning a popular treatise. There is always the possibility that his previous knowledge enables him to appreciate many points which may not be so easily grasped by others less acquainted with the sub